

TEMPERATURE AND HUMIDITY MONITORING (10)

I. PURPOSE: To establish a policy pertaining to the control of a safe temperature and sanitary environment for all refrigerators and freezers containing patient and employee food, medications, and laboratory specimens, as well as monitoring temperature and humidity levels in designated areas at VA Butler Healthcare and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs).

II. POLICY:

A. Temperatures shall be monitored on all refrigerators containing patient food and medications to minimize the risk of spoilage to products contained within due to malfunctioning equipment. Specimen refrigerators will be monitored to ensure the quality of the specimen is not compromised. Areas containing sterile supplies will be monitored for temperature and humidity to assure the sterility of the supply is maintained.

B. Refrigerators containing patient food and medications shall be assessed and cleaned as needed or at least monthly by the using program to ensure a sanitary environment. Record of cleaning will be maintained (Attachment B.)

C. Employee food and patient nourishments must be kept on separate shelves in the refrigerators.

D. Food, medications, and specimens will not be stored in the same refrigeration units. Refrigerators are to be labeled identifying the contents of the unit i.e. specimens, food, medications.

III. RESPONSIBILITY:

A. The Director has overall responsibility for implementation of the policy.

B. The Boiler Plant Operator, Facilities Management is responsible for twenty-four hour seven day a week monitoring of the Checkpoint temperature and humidity system, for maintenance of the performance of temperature and humidity controlling equipment, and for taking corrective action of unresolved alarms and alerts. Facilities Management is responsible for setting the acceptable range of all monitoring devices according to guidelines established (Attachment A.)

C. Supervisors are responsible for verification that employees are in compliance with the policy and cleaning of refrigerators, and when appropriate notifying Facilities Management when equipment is not operating correctly.

D. Department personnel assigned to each monitoring device will verify that the temperature is within acceptable range each day that staff is on duty. All out of range values will be reported to the Boiler Plant Operator for follow up.

E. Nursing personnel is responsible for designating and labeling the shelves to be used for

patient food/nourishments only.

F. Nutrition and Food Service staff is responsible for removing any remaining patient nourishments from the refrigerators on the patient care units daily.

IV. PROCEDURE:

A. All refrigerators containing patient food, medications or specimens throughout the facility and in the CBOCs will be equipped with a temperature monitoring device. Locations containing clean and sterile storage and shelf stable foods will be equipped with temperature and humidity monitoring devices.

B. Designated department employees will log on to the electronic system and verify that temperatures are within acceptable ranges for the equipment or area that they are monitoring. If the monitoring device indicates an out of range value, department employees should investigate the cause, such as a door left open, stocking or cleaning of unit etc. After investigating, staff will notify the Boiler Plant Operator of the alert and cause if known and the Boiler Plant Operator will clear the alert and document any corrective action taken into the electronic system.

C. The Boiler Plant Operator will provide twenty-four hour, seven day a week monitoring of the temperature and humidity system. In the event a refrigerator temperature is out of acceptable range, the boiler plant operator will notify the staff to check the unit for open doors, etc. If the refrigerator is out of acceptable range for over 2 hours, the Boiler Plant Operator will notify the Pharmacy Manager/on call pharmacist, the Food Service Supervisor/on call Dietitian, or the Lab Supervisor/on call Lab technician as appropriate for guidance of disposal and/or replacement of the contents contained in the unit.

D. If the refrigerator temperature is out of acceptable range for over 2 hours during non-administrative hours at a VA Staff Model CBOC, staff at the CBOC will be notified by the Boiler Plant Operator by the start of the day light tour on the next business day. CBOC Staff will then notify the Pharmacy Manager or Laboratory Supervisor as appropriate for guidance of disposal and/or replacement of the contents contained in the unit.

E. For Contract Model CBOCs using an alternative 24 hour monitoring system, contract staff should notify the Pharmacy Manager or Laboratory Supervisor as appropriate for guidance of disposal and/or replacement of the contents contained in the unit any time the temperature is determined to be out of range for more than two hours.

V. REFERENCE:

"Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Healthcare Facilities", recommendations of CDC and the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC), MMRW, Vol. 52, No. RR 10;1, 6161C3. June 2003.

VI. RESCISSION: Medical Center Memorandum EC-24 dated October 24, 2010.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John A. Gennaro".

JOHN A. GENNARO
Director

DISTRIBUTION: C

(Automatic Review Date: January 8, 2017)

ATTACHMENT A

GUIDELINES FOR TEMPERATURE AND HUMIDITY RANGES

Type of Unit/Room	Temperature Range	Humidity Range	Guideline Reference
Medication Freezer	-58 to +5 degrees F (-50 to -15 degrees C)	NA	Manufactures Recommendations
Refrigerated Food Storage	33-41 degrees F.	N/A	VHA Handbook 1109.04, Food Service Management Program, Paragraph 16. Storage
Freezer Food Storage	At or below 0 degrees F.	N/A	VHA Handbook 1109.04, Food Service Management Program, Paragraph 16. Storage
Shelf Stable Foods	50-70 degrees F.	50-60%	VHA Handbook 1109.04, Food Service Management Program, Paragraph 16. Storage
Sterile and non sterile supply storage	65-72 degrees F.	35-75%	SPD VA DIRECTIVE 7176
Refrigerated Medication	36-46 degrees F.	N/A	http://www.aginova.com/storagemonitoring.php
Laboratory Specimens Separated serum/plasma should remain at room temperature for no longer than eight hours. If assays will not be completed within eight hours, serum/plasma should be refrigerated unless otherwise directed	2-8 degrees C 35 – 46° degrees F.	N/A	Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute (formerly NCCLS), H18-A3, Volume 24, No 38, “Procedures for the handling and Processing of Blood Specimens; Approved Guideline-Third Edition”
Laboratory Reagent Refrigerator	2-8 degrees C 35 – 46° degrees F.	N/A	Manufacturer’s recommendation
Laboratory Reagent Freezer	-15 to -30° degrees C	N/A	Manufacturer’s recommendation
Laboratory Incubator	37 degrees C	N/A	Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute (formerly NCCLS)

ATTACHMENT B

REFRIGERATOR CLEANING LOG

ASSESS REFRIGERATOR FOR CLEANLINESS AND CLEAN IF NEEDED EVERY MONTH AND INITIAL.

Fiscal Year _____ Month	DATE ASSESSED/CLEANED	INITIAL
October		
November		
December		
January		
February		
March		
April		
May		
June		
July		
August		
September		